



FLEXITARIAN vs VEGAN vs VEGETARIAN

Vegetarians mainly base their diets on foods of plant origin, but there are different levels of vegetarianism according to how much animal-derived food is also eaten. A 'lacto vegetarian' consumes dairy foods but no meat, poultry, fish or eggs; A 'lacto-ovo vegetarian' includes dairy foods and eggs, but no meat, poultry or fish. When we refer to a vegetarian, we are usually referring to the 'lacto-ovo vegetarians' who include eggs and dairy into their diet.

Veganism, on the other hand, is not just a diet, but also a way of living that seeks to exclude, as far as possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing, and any other purpose (Vegan Society definition).

A **flexitarian** is sometimes also known as a 'casual vegetarian'. It is a mostly plant-based, mostly vegetarian diet that allows for the occasional meat dish. It is becoming an increasingly popular diet that claims to reduce your carbon footprint and improve your health.

The rise of the flexitarian diet is a result of people taking a more environmentally sustainable approach to what they eat by drastically reducing their meat consumption in exchange for alternative protein sources such as beans, legumes and soy.

The meat-free market, as a result, is growing exponentially, with sales of meat substitutes in Germany expected to reach 255.6 million US Dollars by 2020.

Germany has one of the largest populations that class themselves as vegan, vegetarian or flexitarian.

According to Statista 2019, 30% of Italians have incorporated more vegetarian alternatives in their menus and 22% are buying meat alternative foods.

Veganz released in November 2020, its European Food Report for World Vegan Day yesterday, with more than 2,600 participants from all over Europe. Of the 69.1% of the omnivores, 27.2% can already imagine that in future they will turn to veggie alternatives, meaning that omnivorous lifestyles will be followed by less than 42% of Europeans.

The number of flexitarians, who deliberately consume meat less frequently, is now 22.9% in Europe. Although only 1.9% of people in Europe eat a vegan and 3.1% a vegetarian diet, 57.1% of European flexitarians can imagine switching to a vegetarian and 7.9% to a vegan diet in the future.

And where do they eat? Restaurants throughout Europe have become popular for their food quality beyond featuring a plant-based menu: Based in Milan, **Joia** was the first vegetarian restaurant in Europe to receive a Michelin star. Pioneering chef Pietro Leemann's philosophy of 'natural cuisine' came from travelling extensively throughout Europe and Asia and is based on organic produce and no meat.

A proud recipient of three Gault-Millau toques and a Michelin star, **Tian** is Austria's hottest veggie restaurant. Taking an experimental approach to cuisine, the Tian chefs draw on a multitude of rare and forgotten vegetables, fruit and assorted grains to create new and innovative dishes.

Three Michelin star eatery **L'Arpège** is famed in Paris for its extensive tasting menus. Chef Alain Passard used to serve red meat and poultry but made the decision to go fully vegetarian in 2001, making headlines at the time. Now, he delights in creating indulgent dishes from seasonal vegetables and vegan ingredients.

Founded in 1898, **Haus Hiltl** is certified in the Guinness World Records for being the world's oldest vegetarian restaurant. Today, it is run by the fourth generation of the family and includes many vegan options too.

Lucky Leek has been open since 2011 in Berlin and doesn't just have vegan options, it is 100% vegan fine-dining. Owner Josita Hartanto has created vegan versions of popular animal-product foods such as beef and 'cheeze', which taste just as good if not better than the real thing.

Veganism has introduced a new level of inclusivity to an industry that has occasionally been criticised for its elitism, while also challenging chefs to exercise their creativity in new ways. More importantly, though, it has empowered an increasingly ethical and environmentally conscious population, giving individuals little reason not to embrace the latest culinary trend.